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Israel Denies Claim Nuclear Arms 'Ready'

From News Services

A spokesman for the Israeli Embassy say that "Israel is not a nuclear power. Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear arms in the Middle East."

But he would not comment on the specific figures quoted by Arthur Kranish, editor of the newsletter "Science Trends," who said CIA officials reported at a nonclassified briefing last week that Israel may now have 10 to 20 nuclear weapons "ready and available for use."

Kranish said yesterday that senior CIA officials, in a wide-ranging briefing, also said that Russia's space program is a shambles.

GEORGE BUSH, CIA director, issued a statement yesterday accepting "full responsibility" if any classified information was revealed at the briefing, but he declined comment on published versions of what was said.

"I am determined it will not happen again and will issue new guidelines with respect to what may be discussed at such meetings in the future," Bush said. The

meeting between members of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and "a few CIA officials" took place Thursday, Bush confirmed.

"There was a clear understanding beforehand that the discussions were private and not for publication or for further dissemination," he said.

THERE HAVE BEEN previous published reports that Israel has nuclear weapons, but Kranish said this was believed to be the first time the CIA has been willing to estimate that nation's nuclear capability publicly.

About 150 persons paid \$6.50 to attend a cocktail-buffet at CIA headquarters at Langley, last week, and Kranish — an AIAA member — attended.

In reply to questions from the space-oriented AIAA members, the CIA officials said Russia has encountered severe technical difficulties in building large "brute force" rockets. The officials said the subject was "sensitive" but hinted they knew of three huge Soviet rocket boosters that have blown up.